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Not for Publication - Personal

August 19, 1969

Mr. Gardner Cowles
Editor
Look Magazine
488 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Dear Mr. Cowles:

I am writing you about Mr. Astor's article in the August 12 issue of Look. I have chosen this late date to comment on it to insure that I had ample time to think about the article and to avoid the implication that I am seeking a retraction.

My objective in writing concerns both journalistic ethics and the substance of the article. As to the ethical question, Mr. Astor and I had the understanding that every quote would be checked with me. In fact, Mr. Astor did check most of the quotes. On the occasion that he did so, we had an informal conversation concerning the Harvard riots. I never understood that this discussion was to be included in the story nor was the quote dealing with that part of the discussions ever checked with me.

Had Mr. Astor checked, he would have learned that he completely misunderstood my meaning. I did not say that the war in Vietnam did not pose a moral issue. Rather, I drew a distinction between conscientious objectors who opposed war in principle and those who object to particular wars on their merits. I pointed out that in the latter case, the issue had to be more clear-cut and overwhelming than in the former. Mr. Astor's quote, not to speak of his comment, completely distorted my meaning and was extremely unfair.

Second, Mr. Astor wrote that I believe in the infinite bad faith of political leaders and in the certainty that every technical advance would turn into a weapons system. This cannot be supported by anything that I said and it is flatly contradictory to what I have written on the subject. My

comments on the ABM drew a distinction between the case where the Soviets have already built a weapon system and the case where the choice of entering into a new technology is still open to both sides. I pointed out that we can hardly be accused of starting an arms race when we are trying to match an existing Soviet weapons system over a five-year period and with a proviso for an annual review. Had Mr. Astor read my writings, especially the chapter on Arms Control in The Necessity for Choice, he would have realized that I supported arms control long before it was fashionable to do so. Indeed, many of the proposals of that book from the year 1961 (NPT, Limited Test Ban, Hot Line), have since become national policy.

Third, Mr. Astor ends his article with a comment implying that I believe in an elitist conception of foreign policy. The point I made was that outsiders find it very difficult to give day-to-day tactical advice. Therefore, I made a distinction between consultants (referring particularly to my own case) and operators. Clearly, this has nothing to do with democratic control of foreign policy which concerns not day-to-day tactics, but the big issues of peace and war, and the larger judgment of overall direction.

I do not suppose that in the long term it makes a great deal of difference what Mr. Astor wrote. But I do believe that a journal with the circulation of Look should make a fair presentation of the views of the people about whom they write. This would still leave plenty of room for judgment, favorable or unfavorable.

I want to emphasize that this letter should not be published and I have no interest in starting a controversy with Mr. Astor.

Best regards,

Henry A. Kissinger